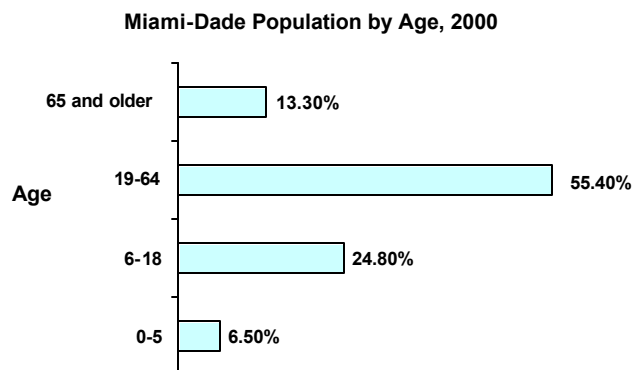## CONDITION OF CHILDREN IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

This section presents a number of indicators that impact the educational, economic, health, and social environment of children. Information in this report was derived from several sources, including current literature and information gathered from the survey of County departments and stakeholders. This section of the report provides a summary of the current conditions of children in Miami-Dade County and background information to better understand the quality of life indicators that impact children and families in our community.

The findings shared in the report will benefit the service providers, who cast a wide net in their effort to address the needs of children and families. The information presented will also aid to impact the following community-level strategies, objectives, and goals:

- To improve information on programs and services to facilitate better access and coordination of services;
- To create a broad community strategy to address children's health and well-being;
- To respond to the cultural diversity of the community and create culturally welcoming initiatives;
- To make services universally available and accessible, recognizing that poverty is still a barrier to access;
- To invest in training, support, and mentoring to increase use of best practices; and
- To build a map of services, population characteristics, and other information that will help to inform and influence the action we take to improve outcomes for children and families with children in Miami-Dade County.
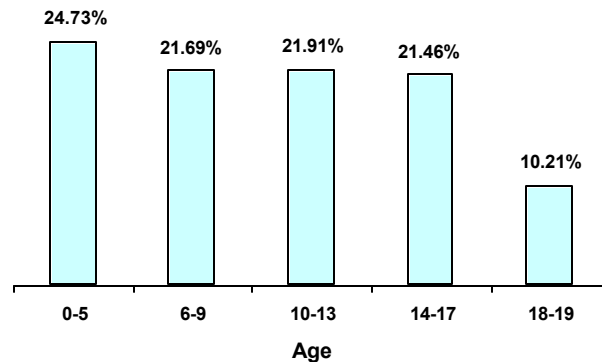
Population and Family Characteristics

Florida is fourth in population growth in the United States, behind California, Texas, and New York, and remains one of the fastest growing states in the nation[1]. The state's 2002 population estimate is 16,713,149, according to the U.S. Census Bureau[2]. Miami-Dade County, with a total population of 2,253,362, has 558,833 children under the age of 18. Florida's age distribution for the youth population (ages 19 and under) is projected to continue to increase in size, as new residents enter the state. In Miami-Dade County, the population age 18 and under was 24.8 percent of the total population in 2000. Also, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 55.4 percent of the population was 19 to 64 years of age.

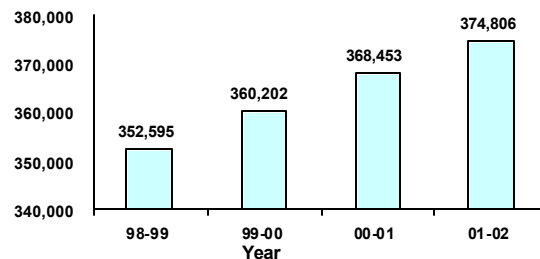**Miami-Dade Population by Age, 2000**

This distribution of children by age in the County shows the largest age group is the five and under category (24.73 percent) and the smallest group are those children ages 18 and 19[3]. In five years, the population growth of children in the County has expanded from a low of 352,595, in 1998, to 374,806 in 2002, an increase of 22,211 children. This rapid population growth is not unusual, as Florida has been in the top four states in population growth rates every decade as far back as the 1920s. Immigrants, mostly racial and ethnic minorities, have streamed into Miami-Dade over the past 40 years.
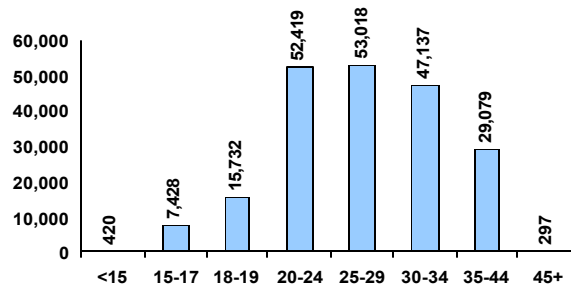
Miami-Dade County Children by Age, 2000

Age	Percent
0-5	24.73%
6-9	21.69%
10-13	21.91%
14-17	21.46%
18-19	10.21%

Population Growth of Children in Miami-Dade County by Age Group FY 98-99 to FY 01-02

Population

Year	Population
98-99	352,595
99-00	360,202
00-01	368,453
01-02	374,806

Population can be measured as the result of three components: births, deaths, and immigration. In Miami-Dade County, females between the ages of 15 and 19 accounted for 39.6 births per 1,000 in 2003, for a total of 23,580 births from mothers in this age group, and mothers between the ages of 10 and 14 accounted for 0.8 births per 1,000[4]. Teenage childbearing is not without many potential adverse consequences (birth defects, infant mortality, premature births, and others) for teen mothers and their families and children. Children born to teen mothers are at higher risk of poverty, low educational attainment, behavioral problems, early sexual activity, and some research has suggested HIV/AIDS.

Florida Teen Birth Rate Ages 10-19 Years

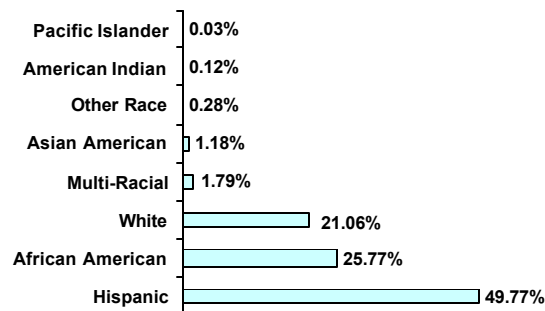| Age	Births
<15	420
15-17	7,428
18-19	15,732
20-24	52,419
25-29	53,018
30-34	47,137
35-44	29,079
45+	297

Infant mortality is an index used around the world to assess the overall health of a nation's children. Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States, accounting for more than 20 percent of all infant deaths. Of about 120,000 babies born in the United States each year with a birth defect, 8,000 die during their first year of life. Birth defects contribute substantially to childhood morbidity and long-term disability.

In 2003, 89 percent of mothers began prenatal care within the first trimester of pregnancy, continuing a positive trend dating back to 1989 in Miami-Dade County. Disparities in access to prenatal care between white mothers, and black and Hispanic mothers have narrowed during this period. In 2003, the percentage of black mothers who initiated first trimester prenatal care was 81.6 percent, compared to 92.1 percent for white mothers. For mothers in their teens, 33 percent received no early prenatal care in 2003.

Immigration accounts for 33 percent of the state's overall population increase during the decade. Foreign-born residents now account for 16.7 percent of the total state population, higher than the national average of 11 percent. Florida's foreign-born population makes up nine percent of the country's total foreign-born population. About 4,637,000 people in Florida, or 31 percent of the state's population, are immigrants, or the children of immigrants. In Miami-Dade County, it was recorded that 1,147,765 foreign-born residents reside in the Miami-Dade County area[5]. That meant that immigration accounted directly for 86.4 percent of the overall population increase in Miami-Dade County. In 2000, 49.7 percent of Miami-Dade County's children were of Hispanic decent. The second largest group was African-American at 25.7 percent, and White, at 21.6 percent.

Racial Diversity of Children in Miami-Dade County, 2000

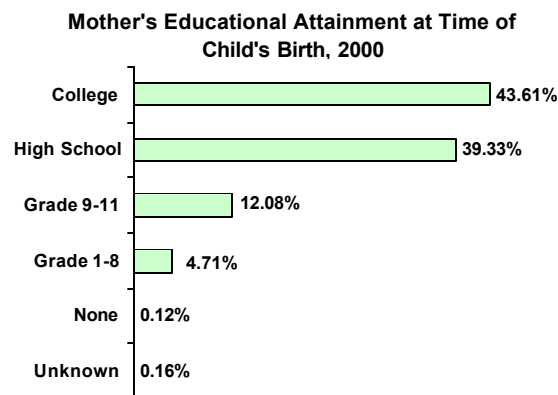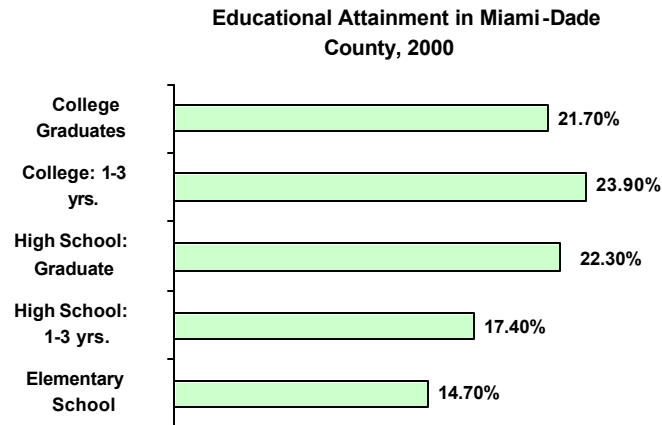| Group	Percent
Pacific Islander	0.03%
American Indian	0.12%
Other Race	0.28%
Asian American	1.18%
Multi-Racial	1.79%
White	21.06%
African American	25.77%
Hispanic	49.77%

Summary

Miami-Dade County is growing, as a community and children ages 6 to 18 comprise the second largest population group. While the number of births and deaths has remained constant and are within one percent of the state and national average, the population has increased through immigration with new residents comprising 33 percent of the population. Children comprise 31 percent of the new resident population. Increasingly, the demand for comprehensive services for children's needs will expand as the population grows; and as families struggle, yet fall short of providing for the basic needs of children (food, health, safety, and others). The challenge for the community is to keep pace with demand and proactively provide essential services to children and families in support of an improved quality of life.

Quality of Life Indicators

The education of children in Miami-Dade County is largely under the auspices of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). The District's 418 schools are charged with preparing youth for the future. The District is the fourth largest in the U.S[6].   The total school enrollment in Miami-Dade County was 647,000 in 2003. Pre-primary school enrollment was 87,000 and elementary, middle school, and high school enrollment was 560,000 children. In a report, the Florida Department of Education indicates that in 2003, 57.9 percent of high school students graduated in Miami-Dade County, compared to 69 percent statewide[7]. In comparison, the report indicated that in 2002-2003, 4.2 percent of students dropped out of school in Miami-Dade and 3.2 percent dropped out statewide[8].
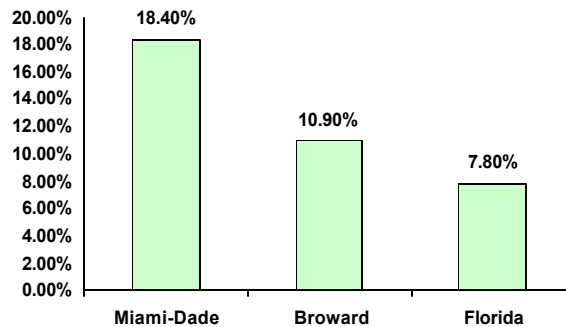
In 2000, nearly 22.3 percent of Miami-Dade County residents were high school graduates[9.] While 39.3 percent of the women giving birth had at least a high school diploma, slightly more than 12 percent had some high school education; while close to 5 percent of mothers only completed grades one through eight.

Educational Attainment in Miami-Dade County, 2000

Category	Percent
College Graduates	21.70%
College: 1-3 yrs.	23.90%
High School: Graduate	22.30%
High School: 1-3 yrs.	17.40%
Elementary School	14.70%

Mother's Educational Attainment at Time of Child's Birth, 2000

Category	Percent
College	43.61%
High School	39.33%
Grade 9-11	12.08%
Grade 1-8	4.71%
None	0.12%
Unknown	0.16%

In 2000, 43.6 percent of the women that gave birth in Miami-Dade County had at least a high school diploma. Slightly more than 12 percent had some high school education; while close to 5 percent of mothers had only completed grades one through eight.

Among people at least five years old living in Miami-Dade County in 2003, 70 percent spoke a language other than English at home[10]. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 89 percent spoke Spanish and 11 percent spoke some other native language; and 49 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well." During the 2003-04 school year, 18.4 percent of all M-DCPS students had limited English proficiency[11]. This is significantly higher than Florida's percentage of 10.9 percent and higher than the U.S. average of 7.8 percent.

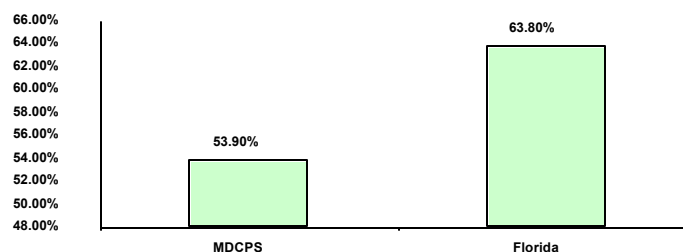**Proportion of Children with Limited English Proficiency, 2003-2004**

Children living in severely distressed neighborhoods in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach Metropolitan Area, number 123,655, in 2000[12]. This figure represents 10 percent of the total children in the area (1,182,600).
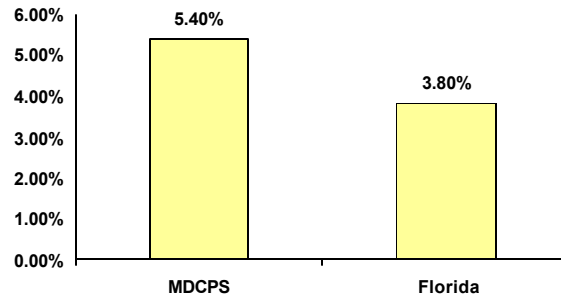
In Miami-Dade County, among people at least five years old in 2003, 12 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 4 percent of people 5 to 20 years old, to 9 percent of people 21 to 64 years old, and to 36 percent of those 65 and older.

In 2003, 75 percent of people twenty-five years and over had at least graduated from high school, and 26 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Among people 16 to 19 years old, 7 percent were dropouts. They were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school.   In comparison to 2001-02 academic year, only 53.9 percent of M-DCPS students graduated compared with 63.8 percent statewide[13]. Students in M-DCPS dropped out at the rate of 5.4 percent, compared to the state average of 3.8 percent[14].

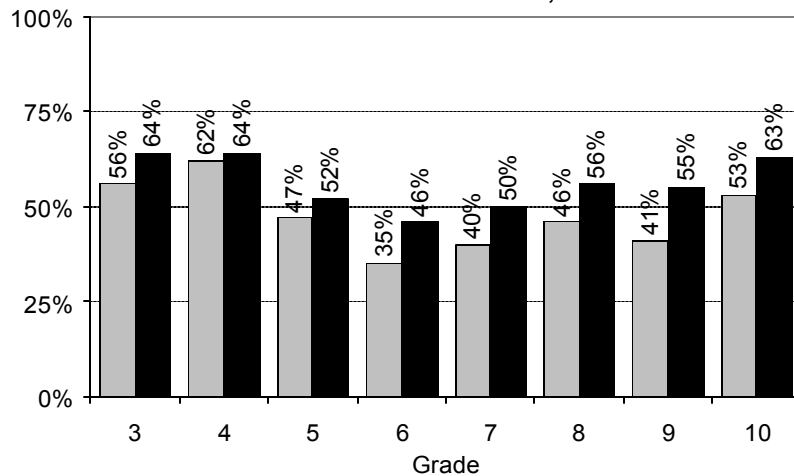**High School Graduation Rate, 2001-02**
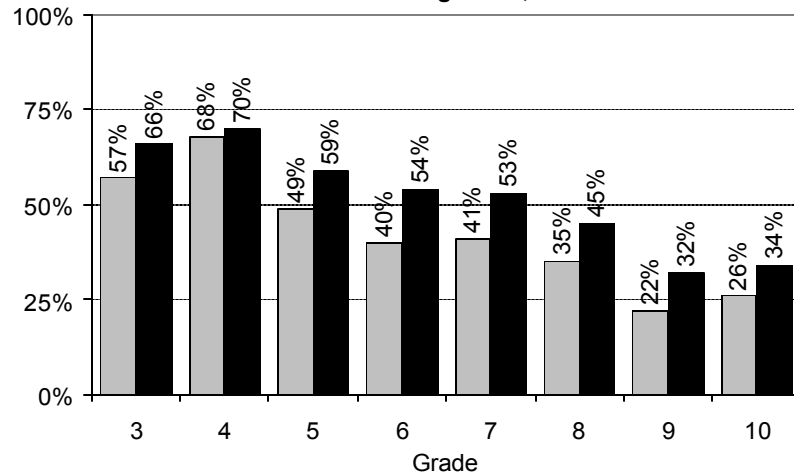
High School Dropout Rate, 2001-02

During the 2003–04 academic year, M-DCPS students in grades three through ten scored lower than the state average on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in both Mathematics and Reading, at every grade level[15].

Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above Grade Level on FCAT Mathematics Exam, 2003-04
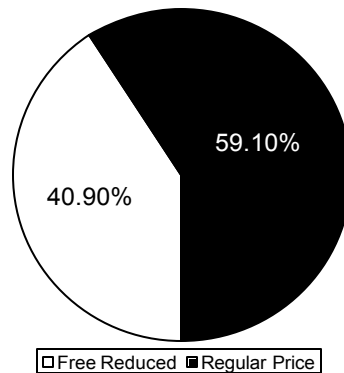

Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above Grade Level on FCAT Reading Exam, 2003-04

The National School Lunch Program began in 1946 as an entitlement program that provides lunch in all schools daily, for students at full price, a reduced price or free. The purpose of the program was "to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children." The goal of the program is to help poor children eat a nutritious lunch every school day. The lunch provides one-third or more of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of key nutrients. The eligibility criteria targets children who live in households whose income are between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level. M-DCPS reported 59.1 percent of the student population during the 2002-03 school year qualified for a free or reduced lunch[16].
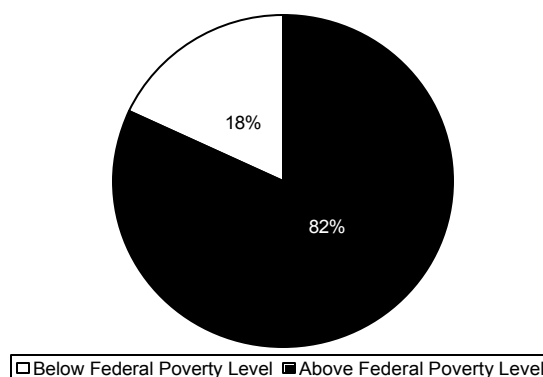
Proportion of Students in MDCPS that Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch, 2002-03

59.10%

40.90%
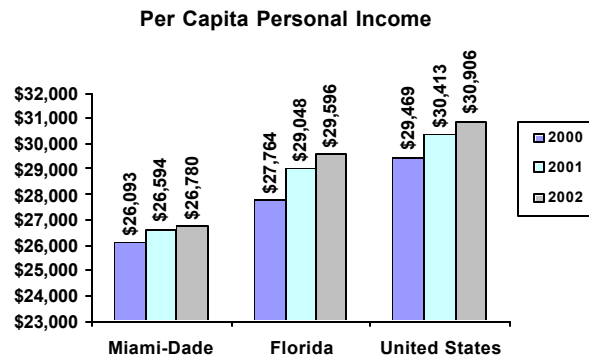
☐ Free Reduced ■ Regular Price

Economic indicators point to a community in stress. Household incomes are relatively low compared to the state and the nation. A high proportion of people and children live in single-family households with incomes below the poverty level, and despite decreases in recent years, a high percentage of residents are still receiving public assistance. Misdemeanor crimes, violent crimes, and juvenile crimes all ranked higher in Miami-Dade County compared with Florida and the U.S. Adult literacy at the lowest levels was higher in Miami-Dade County than in the rest of Florida and the U.S.

In 2003, there were 786,000 households in Miami-Dade County[17]. The average household size was three people. Families made up 70 percent of the households in Miami-Dade County that year. This figure includes both traditional families (46 percent) and extended families (24 percent). Non-family households made up 30 percent of all households in Miami-Dade County. In 2003, 18 percent of people were below the federal poverty level[18]. Twenty-four percent of related children under the age of 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 23 percent of people 65 years old and over. Fifteen percent of all families, and 33 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present, had incomes below the poverty level.
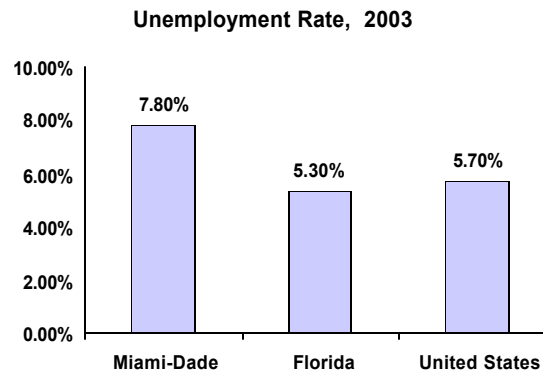
Miami-Dade Poverty Rate, 1999

18%

82%

☐ Below Federal Poverty Level ■ Above Federal Poverty Level

The median income of households in Miami-Dade County was $36,089[19]. Eighty-one percent of the households received earnings and 8 percent received retirement income other than Social Security. Twenty-seven percent of the households received Social Security. The average income from Social Security was $10,401. When comparing 2000, 2001, and 2002, the median income has increased in Miami-Dade County by $9,309.

Per Capita Personal Income

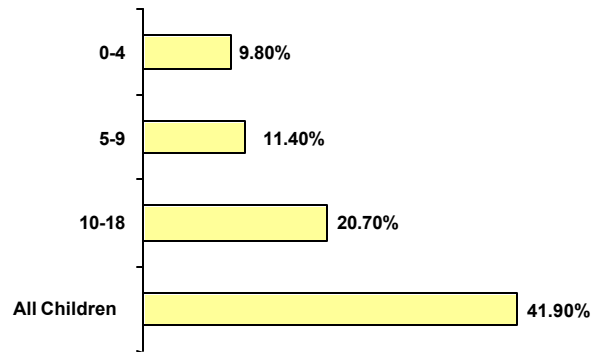|	Miami-Dade	Florida	United States
2000	$26,093	$27,764	$29,469
2001	$26,594	$29,048	$30,413
2002	$26,780	$29,596	$30,906

In 2003, the unemployment rate of Miami-Dade County was greater than both the State of Florida and the United States. The County's unemployment rate was 7.8 percent while the State's unemployment rate was 5.3 percent, and the unemployment rate for the United States was 5.7 percent[20].

Unemployment Rate, 2003

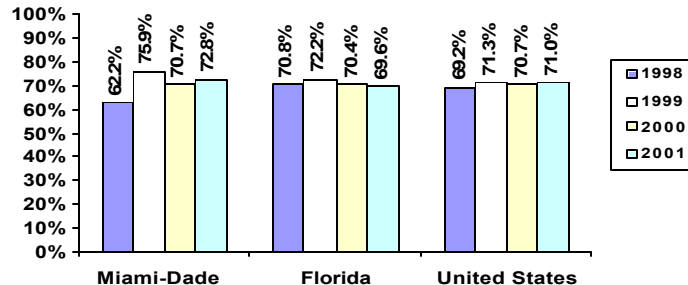| Miami-Dade	Florida	United States
7.80%	5.30%	5.70%

In a recent health survey of the nation's population, the findings indicate that over 9 million (12.8 percent) children in the United States presently have a special health care need. One in five households in the U.S. include children with special health care needs. More than 450,000 of Miami-Dade's residents do not have health insurance -- that's one out of every five people in the county. Sadly, 120,000 of the uninsured are children. In Miami-Dade, 30 percent of Hispanics, 25 percent of Blacks, and 39 percent of people of other ethnicities lack health insurance. In 2003, 41.9 percent of all Miami-Dade County children reported not having any health insurance[21]. Children ages four and under represented 9.8 percent and ages five to nine represented 11.4 percent of the children with no health insurance.

Miami-Dade County Children Without Health Insurance, 2003

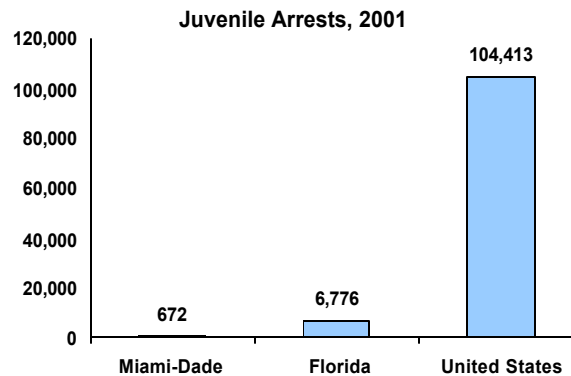| Age Group	Percentage
0-4	9.80%
5-9	11.40%
10-18	20.70%
All Children	41.90%

The mission of Miami-Dade County local health agencies is to protect and promote health, prevent disease, and respond to health emergencies. Adequate immunization protects children against several diseases that killed or disabled many children in past decades. Rates of childhood immunization are one measure of the extent to which children are protected from serious preventable illnesses. The Health Department reports that in 2003, 90.5 percent of children under the age of 2 in Miami-Dade County had received the recommended immunizations in comparison to 72.8 percent of the children in 2001[22].

Miami-Dade County Children Immunized by Age 2, 2003

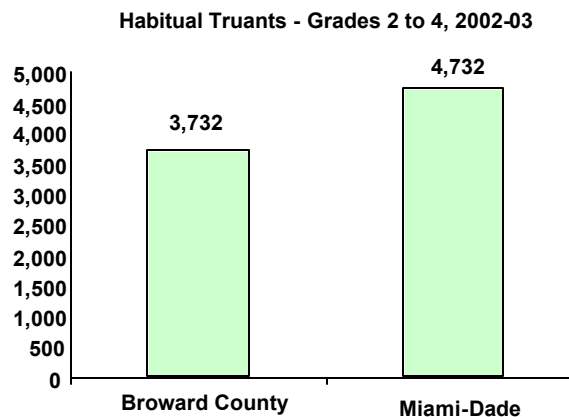|	Miami-Dade	Florida	United States
1998	62.2%	70.8%	69.2%
1999	75.9%	72.2%	71.3%
2000	70.7%	70.4%	70.7%
2001	72.8%	69.6%	71.0%

Social behavior leading to delinquency has resulted in Juvenile Courts being challenged by an increase in the number of child delinquents coming before them. In 2001 alone, juvenile courts handled more than 15,040 juvenile offenders younger than 13 years old[23]. These juvenile offenders account for one in three juvenile arrests for arson, one in five juvenile arrests for sex offenses, and one in twelve juvenile arrests for violent crime. Because youth referred to juvenile court before the age of 13 are far more likely to become chronic juvenile offenders than youth whose initial contact occurs at a later age, there is reason for concern over the growing number of child delinquents.

Juvenile arrests in the County have declined in recent years as overall crime rates have decreased. However, this continues to be a focus of concern for those serving children in our community. The creation of a Juvenile Assessment Center to process all youths arrested has greatly improved intake and processing. In Miami-Dade County, it was reported that the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice detained 2.47 percent of youth ages ten to fourteen and 6.48 percent of youth ages fifteen to nineteen in 2001.

Juvenile Arrests, 2001

Miami-Dade	672
Florida	6,776
United States	104,413

Numerous studies have shown that there is a link between school truancy and juvenile delinquency. Ensuring that children attend school and receive a quality education has become a challenge for parents and society. For many students, considered "at-risk" however, daily attendance of school regularly is a formidable challenge faced by them, their parents, the school system, and law enforcement agencies. Florida law defines "habitual truant" as a student who has fifteen or more unexcused absences within ninety calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent or guardian, and who is subject to compulsory school attendance.

Habitual Truants - Grades 2 to 4, 2002-03

Broward County	3,732
Miami-Dade	4,732

During the 2002-2003 school year, 5.9 percent of students in Miami-Dade County were considered habitual truants (twenty-one or more unexcused absences during the school year)[24].

Summary

An enormous challenge faces the County as the Miami-Dade County Public School System, the fourth largest in the nation, prepares children for life's challenges in their pursuit of a quality education. Better than half (57.9 percent) of youth in the County graduated from high school in 2003. This despite the fact that children and youth are more like to be adversely impacted by crime, poverty, and a myriad of other negative influences that exist in society. A combination of programs and services are clearly making a difference in the lives of children and youth in Miami-Dade County, as evidenced by improved graduation

rates; reduction in the school drop out rate; an increase in the number of children receiving recommended immunizations; a decrease in the infant mortality rate; and an improved response and treatment of first-time juvenile offenders by the courts and the justice system.

Overall, the condition of children in Miami-Dade County has shown some improvement during the last year. This report attempts to identify and document some of the major organizations that provide or fund children's services; provide estimates of the number of children benefiting from each program; and profile at least a portion of the wide array of programs and initiatives targeting children and families in Miami-Dade County, Florida. It is hoped that with the continued efforts of the County and local stakeholders, and the programs they support or administer, that further progress can be made in improving the condition of children in Miami-Dade County.

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[18] Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01, as cited in Statistical Profile of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, pages 2-5, exhibit 2-9, accessed March 9, 2005 on-line at: http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/pdf/dadechp2_2002.pdf

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